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Dewey Today: The British and European Scene

At a point halfway through this institute and at the commencement of the second evening session, I am appalled at the problem of making my contribution intellectually stimulating as well as entertaining. I cannot regard my paper as something other than a watershed. Earlier ones have stressed the history of the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and its place in the North American scene, while I have been invited to survey somewhat wider horizons (with apologies to the North American continent) in the shape of British use and influence, with what I trust will be a suitable appendix on the European scene.

My own direct involvement with DDC is relatively recent, although I have a professional relationship which goes back to the twelfth edition. As assistant editor of the *British National Bibliography* (BNB), I became relatively close with Dewey, although again only in an indirect sense— as I was particularly responsible for cataloging rather than classification. I became more involved with DDC when, as Secretary of the Cataloguing and Indexing Group of the (British) Library Association, I was asked in 1968 by the Research Committee of the association to assist in the reconstitution of its Decimal Classification Revision Subcommittee. Such a subcommittee had existed in earlier years, and already had some contact with the editor of DDC and the Forest Press. It would be impolitic of me to examine publicly the reasons for the lack of growth in those earlier relations. What should be emphasized here, I think, is

the tremendous degree of good faith that has been established between DDC and British librarianship since then.

The first object of my paper is to describe the place of Dewey in Britain in the late 1960s, and then to relate the many acts of collaboration which have taken place since then. Finally, I shall discuss the possibilities of the establishment of a foothold by DDC in Europe.

It is my personal view that nearly all the comments and criticisms of Dewey which were generated in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s were fully justified. Unfortunately, during the period when DDC-16 was in preparation, little notice was taken in America of British representations, particularly as used by BNB. No one in the United States appreciated the significance of the regular production, in BNB, of a classified catalog organized by DDC. If the response had been more spontaneous we could have had a table of standard subdivisions in DDC-16 and much of the progress established with DDC-17 and DDC-18 would have been consolidated at an earlier date. Everyone would thus have gained from a continuous and intimate relationship between DDC and British librarianship well over ten years in advance of the present time. However, during the 1950s and 1960s, we in Britain did not appreciate why our American counterparts were unable to accept our suggestions immediately. We did not fully realize that Forest Press was operating a business enterprise which at the time was suffering financially. Quite justifiably, Forest Press was careful not to upset the market which had provided it up until that time with an established income. In addition, American librarians had little training in the theoretical principles which we in Great Britain had absorbed during the postwar classification renaissance. In fact confusion probably resulted from British ideas on the philosophy of the classified catalog—a tool of which, because of the existence of the services of the Library of Congress, U.S. librarians had little experience, and even less need.

When our committee began work in 1969, it immediately became clear that there was little we could do to assist in the preparation of the DDC-18, the schedules of which had already been prepared in draft. We were given the opportunity to comment on these draft schedules as they then existed, but there was no possibility of modifying them to any great extent. We therefore concentrated our attention on checking those schedules which would be the subject of considerable British interest, such as government, education, botany, zoology, geography, history and other subjects where terminology between English and American-English is always at variance.

This work was interrupted by the news that the editor Benjamin Custer and the executive director of the Forest Press, Richard Sealock, were to visit Britain early in 1969 and were anxious to meet the committee. For this occasion we decided to review our entire relationship with the editorial office

in Washington and with the publishers at Forest Press. We listed a number of objectives to discuss in broad terms with the visitors; these were as follows:

1. The committee should encourage discussion and comments on DDC in Britain and act as a channel of communication between the United States and Britain on all aspects of DDC theory and practice.
2. It should receive and coordinate the comments of British librarians for dispatch to DDC.
3. The committee should formulate criticism on topics of British interest present in the schedules.
4. The committee should gather information on inconsistencies in the operation of the schedules and their structure.
5. It should advise DDC on matters of general policy insofar as they reflect British attitudes in the study of classification.
6. It should assist in the preparation of interpretative and instructional aids and manuals for British users.

In addition, we wished to learn more of the operational background of DDC, such as: how the Decimal Classification Division (DCD) of the Library of Congress was organized; what the overall policy was in relation to the sequence of editions; how the quantity of relocation in each edition was decided; and what machinery should be set up between British and American agencies to achieve closer cooperation. One of the immediate results of this visit was that we were asked to prepare an outline paper for presentation at the next meeting of the Editorial Policy Committee (EPC). Another suggestion, which was accepted, was that the British committee develop relations with library associations in the British Commonwealth, with whom we already had a strong bond through common systems of professional education.

The outline paper which was presented to EPC referred to the previous British subcommittee as acting as an advisory body on matters intrinsic to DDC, whereas the new committee had the intention of serving in the broadest sense as a channel of communication in both directions for all aspects of theory and practice. I might add here that we were already being asked for advice on the British market. We find that we can be of considerable assistance to publishers in this matter.

We claimed in our outline paper, dated September 1969, that: British public libraries were all using Dewey Decimal Classification and that a number of university and college libraries were moving in that direction; for historic and academic reasons British library schools paid considerable attention to DDC; and the largest service agency, the British National Bibliography, and a number of other agencies and services were concerned principally with DDC as a means of subject organization of knowledge and the classification of books.

In this way we stressed the significant user community in Great Britain, which now had a focal point in the form of a British committee.

The committee decided that there were both areas and directions of concern which we needed to emphasize. The areas consisted of the use, theory, education and future developments of DDC. The committee decided that it would concentrate specifically on British interests, but it was expected that these interests would have wider implications. There were two directions of concern: (1) toward DDC itself as represented by the Forest Press and the DDC division of the Library of Congress; and (2) toward users of DDC in Britain. We stressed the need for an effectual channel of communication with messages passing both ways. We pointed out that DDC could not expect support and assistance from us unless it was prepared to support us reciprocally.

Although these were simple statements, the overall situation was complex. Practicing librarians, library schools, and service agencies all had different needs, but it was agreed that the problems discussed should be resolved on the basis of a coherent view of the classification.

The statement was supported by an appendix indicating some of the technical problems which would serve to indicate the nature of British reaction to recent editions of DDC. I think it might be useful to note the principal ones here, at least in an abbreviated form. Those that concerned us seriously were problems relating to the order, detail, universality, and editorial control of the classification. Most of our comments fell under the heading "order." We were troubled by the continuing evidence of bad classification structure, such as the use of the subordinate numbers to express coordinate topics. We also commented on the placing of subordinate subjects in coordinate numbers. Many of the variants from the general to specific in the Dewey Decimal Classification are results of compromise made in order to minimize the quantity of re-used numbers. This is particularly noticeable in the general treatment of *transport*, which is placed at the head of class 380 *commerce*, while the different types of transport appear at 385-388. The introduction of centered headings in the seventeenth edition made up of "through" numbers allows for a concept to appear in its correct hierarchy, but the inability to use these numbers notationally reduces their value to absurdity. The British committee suggested that centered headings be regarded as alternative placings, but this was not accepted by the Editorial Policy Committee.

Comments were also made on the consistency of detail appearing in related schedules, and the need for consistency in the treatment of subjects of British interest. We did, however, welcome the increase in instructional notes and the general tidying up which was clearly evident in the schedules of the eighteenth edition.

Early in 1970, the Library Association received a joint invitation from the Forest Press and the Editorial Policy Committee to send a British representative to the meetings of the Editorial Policy Committee for an experimental period of three years. As chairman of the British committee I was nominated to attend, and I was called for my first meeting to Lake Placid in October 1970. After a visit to Lake Placid, no one can deny the extraordinary, intense energy of the man who did so much to establish librarianship as a profession in America and whose name has since become a household word throughout the library world.

It will be useful to repeat parts of the report I presented to EPC in 1970 when I stated that the majority of British libraries depended upon the Dewey Decimal Classification in a way no other group of libraries did, wherever they might be located. Because of the lack of centralized services in Britain during the first half of this century, libraries had adopted different editions of DDC and adapted them to suit their own convenience. It was natural that when a centralized service was created it was impossible to satisfy the particular classification requirements of any one group of libraries, even though they might use the same classification system and even the same edition of that system. In fact, the primary aim of *British National Bibliography*, established in 1950, was to produce, by the continuous cumulation of material prepared at weekly intervals, a reference tool which would be able to satisfy bibliographical and subject inquiries of considerable depth. The utilization of this information at any local point for the purpose of cataloging and classification was only a secondary objective and was certainly not part of the overall design of the bibliography. It would seem now, more than twenty-five years later, that the secondary objective is of at least equal importance to the first.

The establishment of British centralized bibliographical services after World War II coincided with the study, and introduction into Britain, of the ideas of Ranganathan. Whether or not the *British National Bibliography* had utilized the theories of Ranganathan to strengthen and support the natural choice of the fourteenth edition of DDC for its systematic display of material, the ideas of Ranganathan would have been imported into Britain and developed through the agency of the newly founded library schools. These developments could not be overlooked by anyone concerned with recording the place of the Dewey Decimal Classification in Britain. The full flush of enthusiasm for these new ideas in the United Kingdom and their slower penetration into the North American curriculum led, on both sides, to a lack of appreciation of each other's problems.

It had been recognized in Britain, since the inception of the Shared Cataloging Program of the Library of Congress, that bibliographical communication needed a standard international format. This was further

emphasized by the rapid development of computerized services. The successful operation of these services required a closely defined base in both cataloging and classification. It was for this reason that the BNB decided to classify its entries from January 1971 on according to the practice advocated by the DDC editors and also to utilize the eighteenth edition for this purpose. This decision brought considerable advantages to British librarians in that for the first time since the publication of DDC-15, they knew from which specific source BNB chose its classification numbers.

The reaction of British libraries to DDC-18 has been watched by the British subcommittee with interest. We are particularly concerned with gauging subscribers' reactions toward the effort made to maintain a consistent editorial policy with respect to new numbers, relocations and phoenix schedules. Continuity of editorial policy must be apparent from one edition to the next. A regularly published statement of intent in this field is very necessary. The repetition of such a statement encourages present use and strengthens sales potential for the years to come. The permanence of DDC's editorial office is one certain advantage which DDC has over some other published schemes, and every opportunity should be taken to demonstrate the advantages so gained.

Some of us in Britain feel that librarians have too long been concerned with maintaining an inflexible set of disciplines for the organization and control of bibliographical information, whether in descriptive cataloging or classification. We suggest a wider appreciation of the philosophy that librarianship and information science are, in fact, the flexible controls over the ever-changing state of knowledge. So many of the problems facing catalogers and classifiers have arisen because librarians are not prepared to change their practices due to the inflexibility of their record. They must be persuaded that the only means by which they can keep their services in line with the demands of their users, and with the development of culture and society, is by incorporating the improvements that are constantly being introduced into their services. It is pointless to produce revised codes of cataloging and new editions of classifications, and to engage their implementation by centralized services if these developments do not receive greater usage at local service points. This message should be continually emphasized by those services occupying strategic positions of influence and persuasion.

It will be seen that the British committee has been concerned principally with the image presented by DDC to British subscribers. If one puts aside the different theoretical approaches to classification and the different subject presentation in catalogs which exist between Britain and the North American continent, one cannot ignore the frequent claims made in the past that the DDC has given little hospitality to the British scene—its institutions, its vocabulary, its ecology and natural resources—to say nothing of the needs of

the European continent. We were therefore anxious to improve this image by making suggestions which we thought EPC should consider.

It might be useful here to summarize some of the other reactions to DDC which existed in Britain in the mid-1960s in order to give an idea of the very great progress which has been made subsequently. At a public meeting in 1967,¹ A.J. Wells, then editor of BNB, spoke of the considerable disquiet with which DDC-17 had been greeted on both sides of the Atlantic. He was worried by the strong suggestion that DDC-18, when it came along, would countermand much of DDC-17. The absorption of modern theories of classification into the intensively revised subject areas would mean that subsequent editions would eventually bear little relation to the then-present seventeenth edition. He went on to add that BNB had long been asking DDC for facilities for compound number building. When these facilities eventually were provided, it was found that American librarians had no appreciation of them, because of their different approach to subject retrieval. In Britain we would still need to provide supplementary schedules in many underdeveloped areas to support our detailed indexing procedure. All that we could do to satisfy our domestic critics would be to provide, somewhere in our entries, standard numbers drawn from the latest editions and presented in a prescribed form according to DDC editorial rules.

This latter suggestion developed from the many criticisms which were supplied in answers to a questionnaire circulated in Great Britain by the Library Association with the financial support of Forest Press. It seemed from the responses that BNB was tackling the impossible. Librarians required short numbers to express specific subjects of great complexity. They wanted to be able to retrieve subject material expertly and exactly by means of BNB indexes and classified sequences, but they were not prepared to use BNB's expansions in their catalogs, nor on their books, nor even long numbers authoritatively derived from DDC schedules.

At this point, you will undoubtedly be interested in hearing some of the conclusions of the report: *Classification Practice in Britain*,² which followed the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire just mentioned. Although the editor, Keith Davison, emphasized the value of the statistical analysis, his general conclusions are worth summarizing. It appeared in 1964 that there would be an increasing demand for specificity, particularly in classified catalogs, but also to some extent on the shelves. Specificity should not be obtained at the expense of simplicity of notation. Davison also claimed that users of DDC were generally satisfied with a great deal of the schedules. British librarians wished for increased specificity in the classification of European subjects. It was generally easier for a librarian to reduce long numbers than to carry out his own expansions. It seems that more libraries

were prepared for major changes than was imagined and would be ready to cope with major reclassification if the result would lead to an obvious overall benefit. He tersely expressed as a final conclusion that the way lay open for anyone who could provide a brief simple classification, with brief simple notation, which would provide absolute specificity for all subjects. This was the perfectionist—but impossible—demand of many librarians. We at BNB and the DDC editorial staff in Washington both experience continual pressure from these extremities.

From the mid-1960s, BNB's philosophy with respect to bibliographical control was changing. It had been chosen in 1966 by LC to serve as the guinea pig for what became the National Program for Acquisition and Cataloging (NPAC). It was gaining international horizons and appreciated that the need for common practices lay beyond national limits. The development of the MARC project immediately after the success of NPAC further encouraged international standardization. It was against this background that we in BNB moved closer to DDC. Here was a meeting of two avenues—one originating with the BNB subscribers, requesting (even demanding) the production of "pure" DDC numbers, and the other stretching across the Atlantic Ocean toward LC, via NPAC and MARC.

Following a visit from Benjamin Custer, editor of DDC, to BNB in the spring of 1969, it became obvious that we could only achieve compatibility with his division in Washington by forming a more intimate relationship. Together we managed to contrive a system of information exchange which has served us well since then. Moreover, it allowed us more effectively to provide standard DDC-17 numbers as a supplement to our own modified DDC practice. Classifiers in the two organizations, have dispatched queries and comments to each other, although early in the exchange it appeared that they were writing notes to each other rather than classifying books. Now the documentation has been almost completely reduced, and a remarkable degree of compatibility is maintained. This was attained not only by means of verbal communication; the Forest Press readily agreed in 1972 to the exchange of staff between LC (DCD) and BNB and provided the wherewithal to make this possible. Those involved at levels other than management became acquainted and thus paved the way for a happy and easy relationship between the classifiers on each side of the Atlantic. To some extent our internal organizational problems were resolved by the decision that beginning in 1971, BNB would be computer-produced through the medium of British MARC tapes and computer-controlled typesetting machinery. We would break with the past and use standard DDC numbers taken from the latest edition. For a number of years it has been possible, therefore, for DCD to accept class numbers applied to British books and so help to increase its output. Naturally, there were disagreements at first and as I have indicated, these led to a

considerable amount of feedback in both directions. An exchange of catalog cards with appropriate notes was all that was necessary. Even in 1970, DCD estimated it was able to use over 80 percent of the numbers assigned by BNB.

BNB also uses DDC numbers taken first from LC cards, and later from Cataloging in Publication material for American titles which appear on the British market. Nearly all of these numbers are accepted by BNB. LC information arriving too late for immediate use regularly highlights differences in classificatory attitudes, although it must be remembered that the number of instances is a very small percentage of the tens of thousands of items handled by both parties. Most of the differences occur when each team ignores a geographic application within its own society and culture, significant to the other team, but taken for granted by the home side. Sometimes the physical format is treated differently in descriptive cataloging practice and this justifiably leads to a variance in subject specificity.

At BNB we have no manual of classification practice other than the editor's introduction to DDC-18. We cannot pop our heads round the door and ask for his immediate advice. Inquiries by correspondence have only a retroactive value. It is unheard of for us to stop the machine to await the result of an inquiry. So we make our mistakes publicly in the "Weekly Lists" and correct them afterwards in our cumulations.

After the criticism BNB received from its subscribers during the first twenty years of its existence, it is surprising to learn that all did not take kindly to our "pure" Dewey numbers. It was claimed that they were not the same as their own "pure" Dewey numbers, and what was BNB going to do about it? The treatment of nonnarrative history is a case in point. In its original classification practice BNB had enshrined the British attitude toward history. History could be treated in nonnarrative form and still remain history. Geography and travel was used only for books concerned with contemporary description of people and places. We all suffered a traumatic shock when DDC-17, and later DDC-18, placed many works of historical nature in the 910s. As many letters from librarians on the classification of history reached BNB as had earlier reached us on the use of letter notation.

BNB's use of DDC-18 is a continuation of the compatible practice developed in using DDC-17. We classify strictly by the schedules and tables and not by privately revealed knowledge of editorial practice. Differences due to subject analysis are to some extent unavoidable. When the schedules provide options we construct numbers according to the editor's preference. Although options may be preferable in local library situations, it is not an easy matter for a national cataloging agency, working in an international format, to prefer particular options. There may, however, be very good reasons for doing so because of a particularly significant local demand. For example, this occurs in Britain with respect to the citation order in class 340.

Many British librarians would prefer to have the option to class under the jurisdiction used by the national agency, but international agreements in the use of compatible programs at present take no cognizance of such situations. A limited number of options throughout the entire schedules must, I think, be permitted in national machine-readable records in order to make the widest use of these records possible.

An interval of several years elapsed between the introduction in BNB of standard DDC numbers as a supplementary service and their use since 1971 for the arrangement of the classified sections of the "Weekly Lists" and "Cumulations." It was a good thing that we had this interval, because we had to provide a link missing from the sequence of our subject retrieval operations.

From 1951 until 1970 our subject index was an inversion of our classified display. A specific subject index entry was created for each class number, and, although we admitted synonyms as lead terms, there was no possibility of rotating the constituent elements of a subject index entry to provide alternative approaches. These approaches were met by searching the classified file from a superordinate number down to the number precisely expressing the subject in mind. This might, on many occasions, take us to hypothetical divisions beyond the most specific DDC number available. Such situations occurred, even after 1960, when BNB introduced so many of its own expansions to numbers by letter notation. Users were given one subject index entry, or a related synonymous entry, specific to their needs. If they did not approach from this point they then had to sharpen the focus of their search by working down the classified file.

This constitutional weakness in chain indexing had been regarded as unavoidable; however, those who were searching for new indexing techniques saw the possibility of overcoming the defects with the aid of the computer. Until 1970, BNB's subject index had been constructed from the DDC numbers applied to the entries in the classified catalog. The index entries resulting were as relative to DDC as its own Relative Index, even though we did not accept DDC terminology. Our subject index entries demonstrated the strength and the weakness of DDC as well as our ability to use the schedules effectively. Sometimes we contrived to overcome the weaknesses by "unethical" practices (at least to the followers of Ranganathan) of turning the chain: that is, of not expressing the constituent elements of a subject concept in exactly the same order they were stated in the class number. At other times we were embarrassed by the profligate use of digits in DDC numbers which expressed notational hierarchy and little else. Here index construction had to jump deftly from one sought term to the next, ignoring the no-man's land in between. After some experimentation, however, the index and the classified file worked handsomely together for twenty years.

Chain indexing in BNB was superseded in 1971 by the newly developed PRECIS³ indexing system, which provides specific rotated subject entries from all sought terms. PRECIS does not rely on the composition of the class number for the structure of its entries. In contrast, the PRECIS analysis of a subject concept treated in a document guides the classifier in the selection of a DDC number for that document. Elsewhere in this volume, a paper by Derek Austin (principal developer of PRECIS) discusses this development further.

There are a number of factors relative to the use made of DDC in Britain which must continually be borne in mind. It is difficult to put them in order of importance and their order in the list is no indication of their relative significance:

1. the development of the UK MARC project in Britain, leading to the machine production of library catalogs through printout, phototypesetting, microform, and on-line services (you will notice that I do not include the card catalog as a continuing feature of our library landscape);
2. the restructuring of local government in Great Britain, which has led to the creation of quite large units capable of utilizing sophisticated computer services. These larger local library units find the task of reconciling the different intellectual systems they have inherited too great for their own individual attention and they are prepared to make far greater use of centralized services;
3. the creation of the British Library, which will surely lead to a greater degree of integration within British librarianship. Peter Lewis's paper (elsewhere in this volume) describes the work that has taken place to assess the Library's own needs within the sphere of classification and indexing. The exact relation between those needs, the requirements of the national bibliography and the users of the centralized services must be correlated.

I predict that future editions of DDC will continue to be essential to British librarianship as long as they are restructured in no greater detail than DDC-18 and as long as they intelligently anticipate the development of new subjects.

It must be remembered that Dewey's system *lives*, not at the Library of Congress, nor at BNB, nor at Forest Press, but in the libraries which are using it on their shelves and in their catalogs. And it lives there, not in a standard and authentic form, but in modifications of infinite variety. This is contrary to the best intentions of the policy of integrity of numbers, which has been maintained to aid consistency of use throughout successive editions. Nonetheless, a degree of integrity in numbers is necessary, but other very positive features should not be completely sacrificed on this altar. The possibility of increased standardization in use is enhanced by mechanization. DDC is produced in one of the world's largest libraries; yet it is not used

there for subject retrieval. It is employed in many important bibliographical listings, but those publications are rarely associated with the ordered collection of books on the shelves of a library. DDC is created in abstraction, where there is no direct application to a collection of books. The first point at which the practical problems of application are appreciated is in the use made of the classification by individual libraries. Here, I claim, lies the cause of many of the defects which have been introduced into the classification in the past, and which we are trying to eradicate.

Let me now relate something of the British DDC Committee's endeavors. Its membership is drawn from public, academic and national libraries, as well as representatives of British library schools. On several occasions it has had the pleasure of the presence of a chairman of Forest Press, its executive director and the editor of the DDC. Such meetings have greatly increased our appreciation of each other's problems and have led to a mutuality of attitudes which can benefit the classification and librarianship all over the world.

The renewed relationship between DDC and the British Library Association was so successful during its initial experimental period from 1970 to 1973 that at its conclusion the Forest Press, with the full agreement of the American Library Association, decided to request the appointment of the British representative to the Editorial Policy Committee for a further period of six years, and to give that person the power to vote. In this way British librarianship is now part of the constitution of DDC and I trust that it will continue to be so represented in the future.

It is true that as it devotes energy and resources to broadening its horizons DDC may still look anxiously over its shoulder to American librarians. This is because its earlier policies have occasionally led to severe criticism, especially from the home market. The success of DDC-18 has removed a considerable degree of uncertainty, however, and there has been continued improvement in the sales since the appearance of DDC-16.

Undoubtedly for this reason, suggestions made by the British committee with respect to DDC-19 have been considered very generously. Perhaps the most significant degree of cooperation was shown in the request made by EPC that the British committee should prepare the editorial rule governing the objective for foreign use. The following draft, submitted by the Library Association committee, was approved by EPC and accepted by Forest Press:

The Decimal Classification is an American classification of international standing and application. In preparing an edition it is desirable to allow positively for the needs, both in details and in order, of countries outside the U.S. Where there is conflict between these needs and those of the U.S. the Editor should give his preference to the needs of the

U.S., but must make provision for an alternative use by libraries outside the U.S. in a manner appropriate to the particular problem.

The Editorial Policy Committee had already accepted some critical comments from the British committee to restrict the use of centered headings (e.g., 385-388 *transportation*) and to reduce the number of options which occur throughout the schedules, most of which are relics of practice derived from earlier editions of DDC. Our efforts have ensured that the arbitrary selection of subject areas for total revision (i.e., phoenix schedules) should be replaced by a comprehensive review of the whole classification. The Forest Press boldly accepted the revolutionary suggestion that a prospective phoenix schedule for 780 *music* should be prepared in Britain, and it generously provided funds for the exercise. In 1974 the work was placed under the direction of Russell Sweeney of the Leeds Library School, with the British committee acting in a guiding capacity. The objective of our proposals has been to restructure the class as economically as possible, giving ample facility for synthesis and permitting scores and musical literature to be classified homogeneously. We have worked on the principle that the primary characteristic in musical literature is the composer, and that in this category such a characteristic takes precedence, in the organization of scores, over the natural order of executant, musical form and musical character.

One other important area of responsibility which was given to the British committee was the preparation of revised Area Tables for Great Britain, following the reorganization of our local government, which became effective during 1974 and 1975. All the new authorities and their immediate predecessors are included in these tables as well as all significant natural features, so that the British Isles are now treated in the same depth as the United States is treated in DDC-18. The Forest Press has made these tables available to all subscribers in Great Britain as a gratuitous supplementary service.⁴

In preparing these tables it was suggested by the British Committee, and accepted by our American colleagues (who, like all Americans, consider Britain and England as synonymous), that it was now necessary to distinguish between England and Wales on the one hand and the British Isles, Great Britain and the United Kingdom on the other. The notation -41 would represent the general areas of the British Isles and Great Britain, while -42 would be limited to England and Wales. This has meant that the number for Scotland is -411, collateral with Ireland at -415. Such a decision has implications in 914 and 940, to the extent that the Area Tables, geography and history schedules now present a consistent structure; consequently, a history of Britain classifies at 941, a history of England at 942, with the existing period divisions applying to each area according to treatment.

Responses from a number of libraries, to which the British committee submitted its proposals, were most encouraging. The revision gives us a much more rational presentation for local material than we have ever had before in DDC. What might have been a bold and possibly unwarrantable decision, if taken unilaterally by DDC, has the cooperative support of an official Library Association committee and so becomes more acceptable within our shores. It is because of the problems encountered in applying effective notation to the new authorities, and at the same time avoiding the use of excessively long numbers, that caused us to ask DDC to regard the Area Tables for Britain as deserving phoenix treatment.

The British committee pressed for some time for an amendment to the eighteenth edition phoenix schedules for 340 *law*. In the total revision of this schedule, the need to allow for a primary division by jurisdiction was ignored. Many reviewers commented on this defect and were supported by representations from the British committee. Subsequently, this point has been conceded and an option has been created at 342-348, making it possible to arrange legal material first by jurisdiction and then by problem.⁵

Similarly, representations have been made concerning the interpretation by DDC of civilization and history, referred to earlier. A reappraisal of these subjects has been made with the object of permitting a less rigid definition of the term *history*. This has enabled British libraries to resume their traditional practice of classifying non-chronological treatment of historical subjects with other historical works, without conflicting with the general intentions of DDC editorial policy. This was announced in *DC&6*⁶ and adopted by BNB and LC in January 1975, together with the new Area Tables for Great Britain.

As a commercial publication, DDC must continue to absorb as much comment as its market will bear. Now that 45 percent of its sales are to countries other than the United States and 26 percent fall within an area considered by the publishers as being subject to British influence, DDC is doing all it can to remove the impression that it represents a limited range of North American attitudes. It is seeking a new image while endeavoring not to hurt too greatly those who have supported it in the past. For this reason DDC has sought and welcomed the assistance and advice given by the British committee. It sees DDC's use in British libraries, the *British National Bibliography* and UK MARC as a positive recognition of its continued vigor. With the constant development of automated services, the exploration of all avenues leading toward national and international standardization is essential. The degree of cooperation existing among DDC, the Library Association and the British Library is an expression of hopes and intentions for the future, so much so that it is already being copied in Australia and Canada.

At this point it would be useful to summarize the use made of DDC in Britain. The Library Association conducted a second survey on behalf of

Forest Press in 1972; I will give a brief analysis of the returns. We had a 92.5 percent response rate to our questionnaire, which was distributed to over 1,000 libraries. Of those libraries, 48 percent were public, 32 percent college, and the remainder was made up of university, national and other libraries. The libraries using DDC represented 79 percent of the total number.* UDC claimed 7 percent, LC and Bliss 4 percent each. Of the 744 using DDC, 59 percent were public libraries, 35 percent were college libraries, while university and other libraries added up to 6 percent. The largest area of non-DDC use was in university libraries, which represented 6 percent of the total libraries responding.

At the time of the survey, nearly one-third of DDC libraries were using DDC-16 and nearly one-fourth were using DDC-18. The others used mainly DDC-17 and DDC-14. Even at that time more than 200 libraries were considering changing to DDC-18 and I am certain that many have done so since, particularly as they become involved increasingly with centralized services such as BNB and UK MARC. It is only fair to state that the Library Association does not hold a comprehensive list of special libraries; thus, from this survey the apparent use made of UDC in Britain will be misleading. The survey does, however, give a fairly accurate analysis of the attitude of general libraries to classification.

There is little evidence of the use of the abridged edition of DDC in the United Kingdom; considerable use has been made however, of the *Introduction to the Use of the Dewey Decimal Classification in British Schools*, the second edition of which was published in 1968. A newly revised edition is in preparation with the assistance of the British School Library Association. Our DDC committee has been involved as advisers to the Forest Press in this matter, and it is my firm opinion that the third edition will lead to a greater use of DDC in British schools. Regrettably, our schools are not as well endowed with libraries as are those in North America. There is the possibility of a market for the abridged edition when we have more secondary schools with established libraries under the charge of qualified librarians (as distinct from teachers or teacher-librarians).

All in all, there is evidence of a growing interest in DDC in Britain which stems from a number of associated factors: (1) the increased response to British needs in the subject content of the classification, (2) the improvements in structure and philosophy which have been increasingly evident from DDC-16 on, (3) the general tendency to standardization in

*It will be noticed that this figure differs appreciably from that reported by Lewis on p. 104 in this volume. It appears that there is no one authoritative list of British libraries, and that the British Library survey reported by Lewis was done by Aslib and included all special libraries which were institutional members.—Ed.

libraries, (4) the acceptance of standard-DDC numbers by BNB, and (5) the broadening interest in UK MARC, with the acceptance of computer-produced catalogs in microform and the potential of on-line services.

There appears to be little evidence in Britain of a flight from Dewey. If this came about, it would undoubtedly need to be initiated by the national bibliography. However, there is little likelihood of such an event when so much in the field of Universal Bibliographic Control⁷ is modeled on what has happened in Britain in the last twenty-five years. As future security, there is the gradual internationalization of MARC, which is now established as the primary communication format for bibliographic data. We cannot afford a burden of additional systems on our already fully loaded communication format. Those systems already in the field—and capable of maintaining their lead—will stay in front.

The Decimal Classification will continue to serve to organize material on shelves in libraries; it will serve to exploit in bibliographies a wide range of general literature, certainly as long as traditionally published tools are required, but its place as an aid in subject indexing may decline in the face of competition from computer-generated indexing systems such as PRECIS.

It will be argued by some that DDC needs no more expansion or rationalization, and that it should achieve and maintain a status quo, thus relieving librarians of the necessity of upgrading their records and changing the class numbers on their books. May I ask those who represent this point of view whether they regard any current classification as being near perfection? Are they content to let the order of material on their open shelves represent outmoded attitudes toward knowledge? Would they still accept DDC-11 if they accept DDC at all?

While we cannot expect a total and instant rationalization of the Decimal Classification, we have seen positive progress toward improvement in the last three editions and we must expect, and demand, a continuation of those achievements in all succeeding editions. That the Decimal Classification has at last appreciated the existence of librarianship outside the North American continent must surely indicate that the profession in America is not unaware of its responsibilities to the world at large. Dewey belongs to all; it escaped from Amherst nearly a century ago. It has crossed oceans and penetrated continents, and cannot afford to be restrained as an isolationist within the heart of the Midwest. Those who avoid issues by ignoring problems are only storing up even greater difficulties for those who succeed them. We must therefore look for the continued growth and maintenance of the classification in spite of that local phenomenon, the flight from Dewey.

I cannot believe that any one of the currently used general systems of classification is so near perfection that it does not warrant improvements which must be mirrored in notational changes or dual provision. Those who

recommend and accept systems because there is little or no evidence of published modification are deluding themselves. All one can hope is that the changes effected in any general system of classification are compatible, change to change, edition to edition. If not, users and classifiers lose faith. It is perhaps the saddest of ironies that DDC is the only general system of classification which examines itself publicly every few years. In doing so it demonstrates at once both its strengths and its weaknesses. Regrettably, criticism always focuses on the apparently worst defects in any system. The Forest Press must continue to take a positive attitude toward the need for maintenance and revision. DDC could die as quickly from a lack of tonic as it could from too great a dose of aperient.

We come now to the appendix—Europe. Here, the use of DDC is limited to selected libraries scattered widely throughout the continent. I have circulated a questionnaire to the seventy-five libraries that purchased the English edition of DDC-18. There could, of course, be more who purchased DDC-17 and DDC-16, but some limit had to be placed upon the exercise. The sample is not great enough to generalize. There are public, academic and special libraries that use DDC-18. Approximately one-half of those queried have replied. Of those the larger proportion use DDC-18 for their stock, and there is little evidence of the continued use of earlier editions. Those not using DDC-18 use either their own system or UDC.

The libraries using DDC-16 modify or supplement it to varying degrees. The modifications are introduced to satisfy local needs, especially in language, literature or history, and sometimes in public administration, law and topography. You will notice here the similarity to the British committee's early objectives. Naturally some libraries reduce the length of numbers. Among suggested improvements there is a plea for standard English; American terminology and spelling is sometimes very baffling—even to British librarians. A simpler introduction might help librarians for whom English is a second language. Less American bias in content is called for by a few libraries, with a plea for greater awareness of European needs in Area Tables, history schedules, and similar topics. Special libraries wish for greater detail in social sciences, education and psychology. Generally, such comments are limited to the social sciences and the humanities. It can be assumed that most libraries specializing in science or technology are using other classification systems.

Although we cannot expect a tremendous interest to be created for DDC in Europe generally, it must be remembered that Scandinavia and the Netherlands use English as their second language. Jointly they represent one-half of the European subscribers to DDC-18. The standardization of library services developing through MARC will very probably lead to some increase in the use of Dewey in these countries. In other areas the publication of a standard translation of DDC may well do much to encourage the use of

the classification. This has been proven by the appearance of the French edition of DDC-18. We know of the considerable interest shown in France, which may lead to the development of a somewhat similar system of bibliographic control to that used in Britain.

French public libraries have been using the Dewey Decimal Classification for many years, although I expect that, like in Britain, there are a variety of interpretations. There is little evidence in France of interest in the original English DDC-18, but I am sure that the publication of the French translation will do much to encourage standardization of practice. This will receive further support when it is possible to extend the services of *Bibliographie de la France* to include DDC class numbers on the catalog cards which it has now begun to issue. It is to be hoped that such a service will commence in 1976, and we can foresee the French library profession taking its place among those responsible for the increasing internationalization of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

The production of a further Spanish translation of DDC will undoubtedly affect its development in libraries in South and Central America, but I have no information which would lead one to believe that what may happen in France will occur in Spain. Similarly, there seems to be little possibility of integrated development in Germanic areas, although a small number of technological libraries are showing increasing interest in MARC operations; for instance, Bochum (Germany) University Library extracts subject descriptors and Decimal Classification numbers from the LC and UK MARC tapes.

Despite the fact that the use made of DDC in Europe is small compared to use in Britain, one cannot fail to note that in some European countries, national bibliographies are arranged by or contain DDC numbers: Iceland, Italy, Norway, and Turkey. Each presents its entries in a different way. Norway makes its principal list under author with a classified index of entries. Italy and Turkey have arrangements according to DDC classes, the former using DDC-18 and giving considerable specificity in class numbers and order. The Turkish national bibliography, arranged in broad DDC classes, is subdivided alphabetically by author. Italy and Norway are among the largest supporters of DDC in Europe and we should note that each country uses DDC in its national bibliography.

While I do not think that a broad frontal approach by DDC toward libraries on the continent of Europe is possible, I do consider it essential that the DDC inform them continually of its development, both in policy and content. The sheer universality of DDC and its implementation in MARC projects in other continents make it essential for libraries in Europe to know something of its nature and its place in the field of Universal Bibliographic Control. It is possible that an enlightened policy maintained and developed by

the DDC will lead to a fuller appreciation in the multilingual arena of Europe. One should not see this so much as a marketing policy, but as a contribution in the best interests of information and its place in society. However unusual its spelling practice may be, DDC today is part of the English language heritage and where our language is used, so will be the Dewey Decimal Classification. It is for this reason that the Forest Press has asked the British Library Association to hold, as part of the centennial celebrations during 1976, an international seminar on the Decimal Classification, to which representatives from European countries will be invited; the intention is to include those interested in the present or the prospective use of the classification in its various linguistic forms and editions. It is hoped that such an exchange of ideas will help to identify the problems which the Dewey Decimal Classification must face in the future—a challenge which I wish I was young enough to see fulfilled in its entirety.

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